Maison Célières
Built in 1879 by Mr. Genais, in a symmetrical design. Parcs, sunshine and scenic views leading to a central square-shaped building.

The bishop’s palace
A new bishop’s palace was built to Faubourg Blanchot in 1905. It also ended up housing Saint Paul’s Seminary and was inaugurated on 25th February 1906.

The saltworks
Charles-François Trémoulin from Gironde Island, established a business in an area of Port Despointes marshland in 1863. P. Okada started up the New Caledonian salt mining operation again from 1919 to 1948.

The civilian prison
In 1912 Noumea’s House of Detention was more commonly known as the civilian prison to differentiate it from the lock-ups at the Penitentiary.

Built in 1898 by Mr. Gérosa, to a symmetrical design. Porch, staircase and open terrace leading onto four rooms in a central, square-shaped building.

Little Sisters of the Poor
Having arrived in New Caledonia in 1897 at the request of Miss Marie Blanchot, they settled here in 1903. A building that is known these days as “Ma Maison”.

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This guide gives an introduction to almost 60 colonial houses and 4 remarkable places dating back to the start of the last century. These houses, which have been carefully maintained or restored by their current owners and brought into the spotlight with this city of Noumea publication, have withstood the test of time and the weather....

This brochure is intended to provide a snapshot of the Faubourg Blanchot neighbourhood in the 1930s, so as to find out more about them. It is based mainly on the 1936 electrification plan for the district. So the families named here are those who were living in these houses in the 1930s.

The trail starts at Maison Célières and can be followed by car, bike or even on foot. The full circuit is a distance of about 4 kilometres. You should allow a good hour to cover it all.

Enjoy a lovely walk around Noumea of yesteryear.
Shortly after Port-de-France was founded in 1854, the valley to the east of Noumea was given the name «Infantry valley» in 1856, whilst in the same year, the one to the south-east was termed «Artillery Valley».

Governor Guillain, who was appointed to run the colony in 1862, encouraged newly arrived colonists to settle over towards Anse-Vata and Port Despointes. A number of plots of land were therefore bought by the following owners: Guillemin, Renevier, Higginson, David, Martin, Blanchot and Carrey. At that time there was just a simple path connecting these scattered plots with the town centre. Faced with the necessity of giving these property owners the means of communicating with the seat of the colony, in 1868 Governor Guillain had a road built from Place des Cocotiers, up the hill known as Cap Horn (cathedral) and then across Place d'Armes in the centre.

The work was carried out by a punishment company of soldiers («compagnie disciplinaire») together with transported convicts. The construction of the road was completed in 1871.

This led to a significant increase in the price of plots of land. For the record, in 1864 these plots of land had sold for an average of 35 francs per 100 square metres.
This panorama dates back to the 1890s. The neighbourhood has really sprung up around the main axis, Route du Port Despointes, where you can spot the first trading house signs. Dirt tracks lead from this busy thoroughfare to the property lots, surrounded by wood or barbed-wire fencing.

The wooden colonial houses are very alike, with their broken-pitch gable or hipped roofs of corrugated iron, an inexpensive and very hardy material, particularly suitable for the climate conditions. The high ceilings and crawl spaces boost ventilation. Many of these houses are raised up on posts or brick plinths, with cellars below. A number of dwellings include outbuildings, in particular lavatories at the bottom of the garden. The owners have planted royal palms, coconut palms and fruit trees to provide shade. The undeveloped areas on the hill slopes are covered in Niaouli savannah.

On the left, the borders of the Military Garden are overlooked by the Johnston property, with its picturesque elevated pavilion. In the background you can see Mont Coffyn, at the base of which, and to the right of the quarry, stand the well-to-do villas built for the directors of the Doniambo company, Société des Hauts-Fourneaux, and the Imbault family. Further to the right, the civilian prison, built in 1881, towers over the landscape. Beyond that, you can make out the town centre, dominated by Saint Joseph’s cathedral, and the port, little harbour and ships moored, followed by Nou Island and the Penitentiary Administration’s facilities in the background.

In the right foreground, opposite the civilian prison, Maison Célières is easily identifiable with its 4 corner pavilions.
NEIGHBOURHOOD HISTORY

Long before route du Port Despointes was built, Mr. Barthélémy Blanchot already owned many plots of land in Artillery Valley. But after 1871, he bought so many more plots that in 1872 he found himself the owner of virtually all the plots of lands located either side of the main road. Two years later he put them up for sale, renamed them and advertised them as: «Faubourg Blanchot Land».

So the new name for this neighbourhood appeared for the first time in the November 1874 edition of the Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie newspaper.

There is little information available on Barthélémy Blanchot. Born in France in 1830, he arrived in Noumea on board the Isis on 9th February 1864, accompanied by his wife, Marguerite Chambellant, who was then aged 38, and their 8-year old daughter, Marie.

As soon as he arrived, Barthélémy Blanchot bought a plot of land in Artillery Valley. He built a grand house on it which was also a large farm, called «Château Belle-Vue».

Mrs. Blanchot died in 1893 and her husband was to
outlive her by eight years. As for Marie Blanchot, she would go on to be responsible for setting up the Little Sisters of the Poor order of nuns in New Caledonia. The Blanchot family, which had no descendants, is renowned for having done a great deal of work on behalf of the poor and the Church.

Faubourg Blanchot then went on to be the last neighbourhood to use the water main which was installed from 1892 onwards. Lastly, it took until the decree of 15th September 1941 for Faubourg Blanchot to be classed as part of the city of Noumea.

This panorama dates back to the 1910s. Up on the hills near Mont Sainte Marie, the new bishop’s palace and Little Sisters of the Poor retirement home overlook the neighbourhood’s main residences. Settlement becomes denser along the main axis formed by Route du Port Despointes. In the left foreground stands the Military Garden, so named because it was made up of a number of small plots of land cultivated by soldiers. On the right is the Faubourg’s marsh, linking the Salt works’ ponds and the creek, flowing into Sainte Marie Bay.
WHERE ROOTS ARE PUT DOWN

Wherever we are in the world, we retain the memory of and nostalgia for the home of our forefathers and the images and smells of our childhood. For the descendants of New Caledonia’s colonists, their grandparents’ home is not just a wooden structure with outbuildings or an illustration of a specific architectural style. It evokes an atmosphere and ambiance made up of memories of a pitcher of cool lemonade, the smell of waxed wooden flooring, the lychee tree in the yard and the creaking gate, but above all, it represents the family cradle and home. The people who came and settled in New Caledonia left behind a house and village or town, but it was on this New Caledonian land that their descendants put down their roots, creating an unshakable bond with this country and blurring their external origins: they feel they are locals, from around here, more than from over there.

Their New Caledonian identity is formed and shared in their attachment to the land and to the past and their forefathers.

TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS USED FOR COLONIAL HOUSES

The materials used to build the walls of the colonial houses were mainly wood or rendered brick. Sometimes just simple corrugated iron was used, particularly for outbuildings. Stone was rarely used in private houses, apart from for their bases or plinths which were often covered with rendering.

The main body of the house consists of the living room, dining room and bedrooms, either side of a passageway. The various rooms may also be interconnected. They are surrounded by a veranda, to provide the building with good ventilation. The veranda is either open or enclosed by shutters along one, three or four sides of the house.

The plinth, veranda, use of slatted shutters and large area of roofing are all factors that help provide natural ventilation for the living quarters which therefore have the benefit of some degree of coolness. As for the roof, although initially made of wood shingle, it was to be very quickly changed to corrugated metal, imported from Australia, which was a cheaper material and easier to maintain. However you can also find tiled roofing, like on the former Town Hall.

The ridge finials, roof crests, moulded gutters and pelmets that often adorn the roofs represent means of affirming and reinforcing the houses’ prestige. Roof vents provide ventilation to the attics, to ensure thermal comfort in the house. The gable or hipped roofs enable rainwater to be collected in cisterns, often located at the back of the building. Most New Caledonian houses are built on a stone masonry plinth, to accommodate the sloping terrain and create a crawl space. The living quarters level is therefore accessed via an external set of steps. The steps leading up to the
living quarters, often on just a single storey, consist of either a single straight flight of stairs or several flights of stairs, winding up. They are the result of meticulous workmanship: dressed brick steps and risers, rounded nosing, a geometrically patterned landing and wooden or wrought iron railings. The entrance, right in the centre, is accentuated by a porch. It is often ornamented with pelmets, acting in the same way as a canopy to protect the windows from rain. The latter often include coloured glass effects.

Fencing around the property consists of either wooden fences or coped walls between dressed brick posts, or alternatively wrought iron railings. Their form and the materials used often reflect the owner’s status. A gate marks the threshold, clearly separating the private and public domain.

COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE AT A GLANCE...

1. Véranda (built around the house)
2. Brace (wooden part strengthening a beam or post)
3. Slatted shutter (wooden shutter that allows air to circulate whilst diffusing the sunlight)
4. Canopy (small projecting roof that protects a door or window from rain)
5. Pelmets (sheet metal cutouts for ornamenting canopy roofs)
6. Bellcast roof (roof extension or broken-pitch roof)
7. Ridge crest (sheet metal covering on the roof ridge)
8. Ridge finial (ornamental king post)

TYPICAL LAYOUT OF A COLONIAL VILLA

1. Road
2. Boundary fence and gate opening onto the road
3. Ornamental garden
4. The villa
5. Outbuildings (wash house, kitchen etc.)
6. Outside toilets
7. Vegetable garden
La maison Célières

ITS HISTORY

Paul-Joseph Célières, nicknamed «Thomy», was originally from La Réunion. He arrived in New Caledonia around 1891 and then married Marie Ohlen. They had three children. The house, built in 1898 by Mr. Gérosa, has a symmetrical design. The entrance porch, with its two flights of steps up to it, leads onto an open terrace giving onto four rooms in the central, square-shaped building. The two verandas provide access to four corner pavilions, each with their own use.

ITS RESTORATION

It has taken 23 years to save and restore Maison Célières. The Association Témoignage d’Un Passé has been working on it since 1986 and the City of Noumea managed to buy the land in 2002. The house has taken on a new lease of life since March 2009, thanks to the collaboration between the Maison du Livre New Caledonian book industry association and the Association Témoignage d’un Passé, which puts on exhibitions and events for visitors regarding the heritage of this neighbourhood and of the city.
FIND OUT MORE!

Take a look at the latest themed exhibitions offered by the Association Témoignage d’Un Passé on an interactive display terminal at Maison Célières.

+ Maison Célières - Célières House
+ Our grandmothers’ garden
+ Faubourg Blanchot, 100 years ago (the birth of a Noumea neighbourhood)
+ Lives and homes from earlier days
+ Hugh Morton, war photographer in Faubourg Blanchot in 1944

FREE ADMISSION
Open tuesday, wednesday and thursday : 14h-17h
Friday : 13h-16h
1st saturday of the month : 9h30-11h30 / 14h-16h

START OF THE TRAIL

Route du Port Despointes et rue Bougainville

Heading from Maison Célières 1, take the first road on the left, rue Bougainville.

Before you get to the junction with rue Montcalm, look at n°6, Maison Quilichini 2, on the right, with its shuttered terrace and coloured glass panes, and then at Maison Mercier, with its wonderful bread oven.
Rues Faidherbe et Montcalm

Head up rue Bougainville past Paul-Boyer School, a former municipal school for boys, built in 1954. There used to be a goat farm here in the 1930s.

Take the first turning on the right or rue Faidherbe. Round the corner, lower down the road you will see two lovely colonial houses on the left: The green and purple façades of Maison (Paul) Goulié 3, built at n°16 in 1936, by Raphael Garcia for the sum of 45,000 pacific francs. At n°14, Maison (François and Henriette) Perraud 4, with its current lavender blue fence hiding a house with ridge finials and a glass transom above the front door.

Turn left down the cul-de-sac known as impasse Montcalm. This is home to two really fine renovated houses. Maison Lozach 5, on your left at n°21, has a fine set of brick steps flanked by wrought iron railings and awning above. Admire the coloured panes and ridge finials. Across the road, at n°20, stands the former Maison Mézières 6, with its orange front and green shutters, built some time before 1914.
Continue on down rue Faidherbe. At n°13, on your right, the white façade of Maison Hénin is enhanced with royal blue window shutters and canvas.
Route du Port Despointes

Turn left at the crossroads with route du Port Despointes. On your right, at n°22, stands Maison Mathieu 8. Maison (Maurice) Delessert 9, a lovely pink-coloured house with white shutters shielding it from the gaze of passers-by, can be found at the end of a pathway at n°24, whilst at n°26, there stands the former Maison (Cyprien) Dolbeau 10, a fine example of a renovated house: note the little porcelain pipe for the electrical cable on its beige façades.

Just before that, at n°30, 30 bis (white with blue awnings) and 30 ter, you can see the houses known as Maisons Giguet (11 12 13), three little buildings that were originally identical to each other, now shielded from the road by a fence with brick posts.
Turn onto rue Jeanne Jugan. At n°5, a pathway lined with bamboo leads to a splendid residence that was originally Sainte-Marguerite church, named after the wife of Mr. Barthélémy Blanchot, the man behind the idea of dividing up the land and establishing the neighbourhood. The church was consecrated by Monsignor Fraysse but was then abandoned after the new bishop’s palace was built. The house was then home to the Jeannin family.

Bear left onto rue du Général Patch. Maison Dauphin is on the right, at n°14, a large house hidden behind a bamboo curtain and fence.

THE NEW BISHOP’S PALACE

The first bishop’s palace was in the centre of town on rue Dezarnaulds, but the 1905 law separating the church and state led to its being re-appropriated by the state. In that same year, a new bishop’s palace was built in Faubourg Blanchot on a plot of land bought by the curacy on 9th July 1902. It would also go on to house Saint Paul’s Seminary. It was inaugurated on 25th February.
Turn left and cross rue Monseigneur Fraysse which leads to the bishop’s palace - the Evêché - and join rue du Révérend Père Rougeyron. Head down that road to see several superb colonial houses.

A lovely painted house stands at n°7, Maison Moury 16.

The three magnificent houses of the Verlaguet 17, Hannequin 18 and Coulon families 19 stand opposite, side by side with each other at number 8, 6 and 4. Take a look at the coloured window panes.
At the bottom of the road, on your right at n°45 bis route du Port Despointes, you will see Maison Dillenseger, a large colonial building with brightly coloured façades and whose concrete outbuildings were built in 1936.

Rue Jeanne Jugan

Turn sharp left onto rue Jeanne Jugan. This time look to your right at the two little houses with broken-pitch roofs at n°8, Maison Grandin, and n°10, Maison Vénisseau. Continue along the same road towards the Little Sisters of the Poor retirement home.
On the left at n°11 is the Miossec house (and subsequently the Pierson family home), a large two-storey house dating back to the 1900s, and then the renovated Maison Mermoud stands at n°15, repainted an orangey yellow colour. The house is hidden behind latan palms that are about sixty years old.

Just next door, at n°17, stands Maison Décugis, with one of its walls covered in ivy. There are other characterful houses to see along this road: Maison Naudet, on the left at n°19, and Maison Allégret behind it.
Rue Jeanne Jugan

Note the wrought iron railings with their brick pillars that are characteristic of the period, which you can see on your right at n°16 and 18 and on your left at n°21, Maison Deschamps. Then stop and have a look at the retirement home run by the Little Sisters of the Poor.

The little building on the right, just as you go in, is all that remains of the original building (1902).

Go down rue du Frère Marmoiton to rejoin route du Port Despointes. Just before the give way sign, look at Maison Cacot, tucked away on the left.

There was no road at this spot for a long time, owing to the presence of the sizeable Port Despointes marsh. To get to Trianon, you used to have to go right round the Military Garden. The high tide mark came right up to the current business, Limousin (boat sales). Rushes and mangroves used to grow there.

LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

The Faubourg Blanchot retirement home, now known as «Ma Maison», was built on the initiative of Monsignor Fraysse on two hectares of land owned by the mission near Mont Sainte-Marie. Built through the generosity of the New Caledonian people, it was designed initially to house the elderly from the pioneer colony (colonisation libre) and subsequently old people released from the penal colony. Work began in 1900 and the first buildings were completed on 30th June 1902. The chapel was inaugurated on 4th October 1903.

The Little Sisters of the Poor, who came to New Caledonia in 1897 at the request of Miss Marie Blanchot, settled there in 1903.
Route du Port Despointes

The little house known as Maison Dumont stands opposite at n°72 route du Port Despointes, with its peach-coloured façade and a canopy referred to locally as a “marquise” over its front door. Turn to the right to head back up to the top of the Faubourg.

Take the first road on the left, rue du Général Patch, to go right round the block via rue Louis Cuer and then rue James Cook, to see two fine examples of houses built in 1890: the houses of (Gaston) Charles and (Paul) Boissery at n°5 and 3 rue James Cook, one with white and blue façades and the other coloured orange and green.

LES SALINES

Charles Joseph Bon, an Oléron Island salt-maker, arrived in Noumea in 1866 and carried out his first set of salt production tests at the end of Sainte Marie bay. He then established himself on Port Despointes marsh land, had ponds dug out and got the first buildings erected. A windmill used to drive a piston pump that drew the seawater at high tide right up to Port Despointes bridge. It would take 3 weeks to a month for the water to evaporate so that the salt could be harvested. It would then form a crust that was about 5 cm thick. Mr. Okada started up the New Caledonian salt mining operation again from 1919 to 1948.
Before heading left along route du Port Despointes, take a look at n° 44, the superb Maison (Eugène) Charles, built in 1909, with its coloured window panes and magnificent wrought iron railings between brick pillars. On the opposite side of route du Port Despointes, at n° 49, stands Maison Gaspard.
Turn left along route du Port Despointes and then take the second road on the left, rue Faidherbe. Continue along this road to the Military Garden buildings, the site of the Gardens tended by the Naval Infantry troop in the 1880s. Turn right on rue de Soissons. On your left, at the start of rue de Reims, at numbers 6 and 4, you can see the larger houses, Maisons Chantreux and Chatenay.
On your right on rue de Soissons there are four small colonial houses that were built in 1905 by the Ballande company. They nestle amidst the greenery at numbers 7, 5, 3 and 1 bis. In the 1930s, they were home to the Morandeau, Millot, Caillaud and Bouyé families.
Look at **Maison Charbonneaux** at n°6 on the left hand side of **rue de Soissons**, which is the exact replica of **Maison Célières**, minus the plinth. This house, which was built in 1898 by the businessman, H. Gérosa, consists of a main central section flanked by corner pavilions, linked by a veranda enclosed with shutters. It was occupied by the Jaillard family in the 1930s. After being destroyed by a fire in 2009, it has just been completely rebuilt, identical to the original, providing an exemplary demonstration of the restoration of a colonial house.
Take the first turning on the left, rue de Strasbourg and then turn left again on rue de Maubeuge.

The former school run by Mrs. Malignon stands at n°11. Built in 1874, Mr Jean Malignon’s house was used as an infant and primary school by his wife, Julie, from 1890 to 1943. Many of the local children spent one or two years in these classrooms before moving on to the Frédéric Surleau municipal school for boys or Suzanne Russier school for girls (on the site of the current town hall). The «school» coexisted with the Faubourg’s state primary school on rue de Soissons.

Terrasson and Thomas House stand at n°13 (brick pillars) and 15. Turn right, up rue de Reims.
THE CIVILIAN PRISON

In 1912 Noumea’s House of Detention was more commonly known as the civilian prison, to differentiate it from the lock-ups at the East Camp Penitentiary on Nou Island. Construction work on the civilian prison was carried out in 1881. Up until 1930, the guillotine, or «timbers of justice», was set up at the entrance to the civilian prison in the middle of «Boulevard Extérieur». The guillotine was used there for capital punishments up until 1939, the year the prisoners were transferred to the camp Est prison facilities on Nou Island, vacant following the closure of the penal colony.

Boulevard Extérieur

On your right, at n°29, you can see Maison Imbault, with its outbuildings, gate, brick steps and very old cycas palms. This huge property was occupied by the Milliard family in the 1930s. At n°27, take a look at the passageway across Maison Unger, which was an SLN company guest house from 1960 to 2012, and at Maison Lavoix, at n°25, which was extended on the right hand side of the house in 1929. Follow boulevard Extérieur to the Arts centre, the town’s former civilian prison.
Rue de Metz

Turn right on rue de Metz. See the magnificent Maison Mercier at n°5, with its front wall covered in ivy.

At the crossroads with rue de Maubeuge, Maison Courtot can be seen on your left at n°4, now repainted white with blue-grey shutters.
On the opposite side, at n°8 rue de Metz, hidden behind a bougainvillea hedge, stands Maison Theuret, showing its Australian influence with gabled façades and including a split-level roof.

**Rue de Maubeuge**

At n°3 bis rue de Maubeuge, which up until 1931 was known as rue de Melbourne, Maison Chauveau can be recognised by its two corner pavilions. On the opposite side, at n°10, stands Maison Lapagne, built in 1896.

Maison Lapagne, 1905, façade arrière - Archives de Nouvelle-Calédonie.
Turn left on rue de Strasbourg and go as far as the traffic lights. Cross route du Port Despointes and head up rue Bougainville. On your left, at n°1, stands the really lovely Maison Georget, which has been enlarged thanks to a wooden upper storey extension, making room for a shop to be set up on the ground floor. There were few buildings with more than one storey at the time. Still on the left, at numbers 7 and 9, there are two identical houses that used to belong to Mr. Noël Bastien (52 & 53).
Turn left on rue Montcalm. On the right, at n°15, behind a screen of palm trees you can see the delightful Maison Faivre with its porch, flight of steps and terrace that was enclosed in 1940. The front of the house is elevated whilst the rear is at street level.

On the left, at n°6 bis, stands Maison (Clovis) Boissery.

Turn left down rue Lapérouse. You will see two houses on your left, built in 1940 to the same design, with an enclosed veranda at the rear: Maison Trigalleau with yellowy beige walls at n° 6, and the white-fronted Maison Lallut at n°4. They both have the same design, with the same enclosed veranda at the rear.

Our trail ends by rejoining route du Port Despointes to return to Maison Célières on your left, which was our starting point.